

Prof. Dr. B. Grzimek:

HELP FOR AFRICAN PARKS

During recent years, the situation in the Waza National Park in the Cameroons has become critical through water shortage. Through the normally usual yearly overflows, the flat basins in this Park were filled, which were then at the disposal of the animals as watering places during the dry season.

While these basins dry slowly, large areas became free so that sufficient food also grows during the dry season. During the last few years the water level of Lake Chad and its inflows (Logone and Chari) has gradually fallen, so that overflows hardly bring sufficient water into the Waza Park.

A critical situation is therefore always reached towards the end of the dry season when water and especially food are no longer available in sufficient quantities. Specialists have forecast a loss of the water level in Lake Chad of 50 cm for this year.

The animal stock of the Waza National Park is therefore — as far as it is at all possible — forced during this time to migrate out of the Park. Mainly elephants do this, whereas the antelopes have to remain in order to wait for the doubtful rain. During these periods, antelopes especially have starved and perished within the past few years to an increasing extent. During the critical period in 1971, about 300 Kob antelopes died within eight days, whereas 400 died in 1972. Another 20,000 are endangered.

These losses would have been considerably higher if the Park Administration had not brought water with tank wagons into the protected area. Thanks to the cooperation of a construction firm working in the Cameroons, the devastation was stopped by making two wagons available without any charge. Even so, about 1,000 animals died at that time.

In 1972 the situation became especially critical, and the Chief Game Warden of the Cameroons National Parks has asked the Zoological Society of Frankfurt am Main, Germany, for help since he cannot finance the transportation of water with his own funds. For this reason, US \$2,500 have been transferred to the Cameroons from the 'Hilfe für die bedrohte Tierwelt' account (Help for Threatened Animals).

The National Park Officials in Malawi have as yet insufficient means for conservation, coordination and poacher control in the parks. As has been proved during the last decade throughout Africa, successful work is only possible with modern technical equipment, for the sole reason that poachers are frequently much better equipped than the Park Administrations. Up to now, the three National Parks in Malawi have not been in possession of a single plane, although there are some biologists and Game Wardens available with sufficient flight experience.

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Upon the application of the Fauna Preservation Society of Malawi, the Frankfurt Zoological Society has given money for the purchase of an overhauled second-hand small plane, which will then be handed over to the Park Administration in order to make successful work possible. The necessary funds amount to about D.M. 42,000.

One of the most important tasks, not only in Africa but throughout the world, is the education and especially the training of youth, in order to bring them up in due time to environment and nature preservation problems and to stimulate their understanding of these.

In some of the African states youth clubs have been founded in the past in an exemplary manner and have made this task their principal aim. In Kenya especially they are already working in this field with considerable success. Similar efforts are being made in Zambia. Within the scope of the Luangwa Valley National Park Preservation and Development Project, propaganda will be made for these ideas in the schools of the country.

In order to support this task, the Zoological Society of Frankfurt am Main donated an English version of the film 'Serengeti Shall Not Die'; the expenses amounted to D.M. 2,500.

Third White Rhino Baby Born

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On 19th December 1972, a third White Rhino was born at the San Diego Wild Animal Park, San Pasqual, California, USA. After being rejected by its mother, the baby is now being nursed and cared for by the Rhino who a week before gave birth to the Park's second Rhino calf.

The natural mother of the newest baby was at first fiercely protective of it and fended off other members of the Rhino herd who crowded around to inspect the male calf. But after several hours the mother, named Mpondo, seemed to lose interest in her offspring.

Because the calf had apparently been abandoned, Park veterinarian Dr. Lester Nelson reluctantly made plans to move the calf to the Park's animal care center for hand-rearing. But in the meantime, keepers standing guard that Sinamra, who gave birth to a female calf on 14th December 1972, had approached Mpondo's calf and was allowing it to nurse.

Sinamra's own calf was born late in the day, and cold weather at the Park during the night necessitated the calf's removal to the animal care center, where it is being raised.

(Clyde A. Hill)